

GOOD FRIDAY – 18 APRIL 2014
ST. DAVID'S CATHEDRAL
ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK

The cross, which stands in the centre of the Cathedral today, was made by the students and staff of Corpus Christi High School in Cardiff. It's an awkward cross. It has proved too big to carry, even for the four men who volunteered to do so. The space in which it stands is narrow. It obstructs the view. It may well be difficult approach during the Veneration of the Cross.

Each one of those “problems” could be explored and meditated upon as we try to understand the significance of the cross in the life of the follower of Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross is the ultimate expression of all that would cause us distress and confusion. Ultimately, the cross expresses all that it means to be cut off from what is good. Cut off from life itself. Arrogance. Pride. Selfishness. Jealousy. Hatred. Violence. All summed up in the word “sin”. Our struggles with failure, sickness, suffering and ultimately death. Questions not just about life after death, but life before death too. The cross is plunged into the heart of all human suffering. “Where is God when people suffer?” we ask. “Here”, says Jesus, with arms outstretched on the cross.

Jesus does the best deed at the worst time. Hanging on the cross, he does not withdraw God's love. He does not say “These people are unforgiveable. I have wasted my time”. On the cross Jesus remains faithful to God, to his mission and to his people. “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do”. (Luke 23:34)

Today is a day of contrasts, of paradox and even contradiction. Jesus suffered all that evil so that we could call this Friday “Good”. And when we “Behold the Wood of the Cross on which hung the Saviour of the World” we might remember the words of Cardinal Basil Hume when he said “It is only when we embrace the cross in our own lives that the cross of Jesus Christ yields up it's mystery”.

Our own Welsh poet, R.S.Thomas invites us to enter into that mystery in these words:

Easter, I approach
The years' empty tomb.

What has time done with itself?
Is the news worth the communicating?
The word's loincloth can remember little.
A thin, cold wind blows from beyond the abyss that I gawp into.
But supposing there were bones; the darkness
illuminate like a museum?
In glass cases I have peered at the brittle bundles,
Exonerating my conscience with mortality's tears.
But here, true to my name,
I have nothing to hold on
to, an absence so much richer
than a presence, offering
instead of the skull's
leer an impalpable possibility
for faith's fingertips to explore